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How Minnesota's weirdest game show made it to prime time in the early '00s



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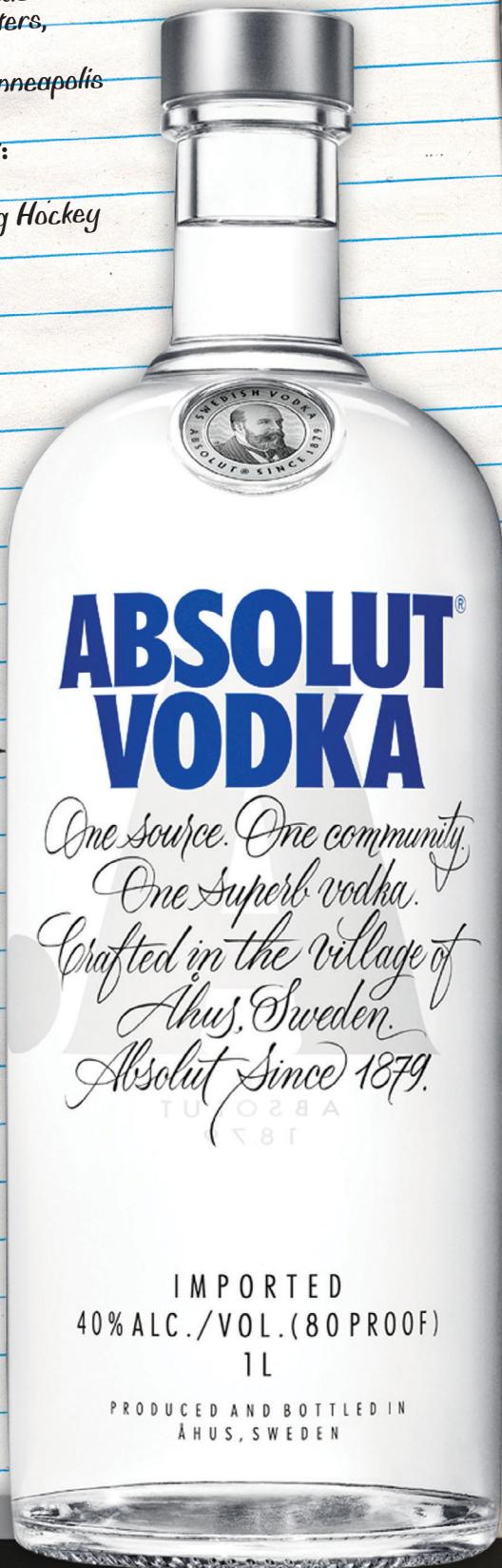
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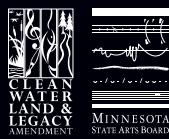


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48

Years Minneapolis' Jack Baker and Mike McConnell have been married, the longest of any gay couple in the U.S.

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\$235

The average cost for a family of four to attend a Major League Baseball game

"I expect to very soon see a live televised stage production of *It's Springtime for Hitler*, starring Kevin Sorbo, James Woods, Jon Voigt, and Chuck Woolery. It will of course be on Fox News and will be produced in Branson, Missouri."

Reader Charles Ritt responds to "Minnesota Hercules Kevin Sorbo weighs in on the 'grab 'em by the pussy' debate 3 years late," at citypages.com.

DEAD HEART SYNDROME

THE AMERICAN REFUGEE COMMITTEE, a Minneapolis nonprofit, delivers health care to 1.5 million people a year. It also runs camps providing respite to those fleeing war, persecution, and famine. But it would prefer not to use the word "refugee" anymore. When it launched 40 years ago, that word evoked compassion. Yet as the country increasingly experiments with heartlessness, "refugee" for many has become synonymous with fear, scary religions, and the even scarier pigmentation of the guy next door. So the committee is changing its name to Alight. While it may be confused for a gas company or a new weight-loss drink, such is the price we pay when we steal our hearts to the suffering of those whose only wish is life in tranquility.

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Minnesota woman says police questioned her and her friends for **'SHOPPING WHILE BLACK'**

THE STAIN OF ST. CLOUD

New York Times exposes Minnesota's anti-Somali epicenter

There are a few ways to get your hometown splashed across the pages of the New York Times. But an article painting St. Cloud as fearful and refugee-hating is probably not the most coveted.

A front-page story last week included a string of baffling vignettes, each portraying white residents airing their distrust and even disgust with Somali refugees who have settled in town.

They viewed the newcomers as "innately less intelligent than the 'typical' American citizen," a looming threat to "replace" white people, and most sinisterly, "not from Norway." One unnamed woman "bemoaned" sections of the city taken over by Somalis, where white

people were simply too uncomfortable to return.

"They were just—" she said, searching for the words to describe the offending behavior of the Somali Americans. "They were just walking around."

Social media was quickly aflutter. Some were horrified. Some thought it was an unfair smear of a diverse, hard-working town based on the opinions of a vocal few.

"I don't think it's reflective of the community," Mayor Dave Kleis says. He invited the reporter to return to get

a broader read and "balance" some of the rhetoric.

This article comes three years after a City Pages piece called St. Cloud "the worst place in Minnesota to be Somali," and included horror stories from Somali residents about being yelled at on the streets, finding pig entrails festooned

across doorways to Somali-owned shops, and kids coming home red-eyed and exhausted after a day of being bullied at school.

That same year, *This American Life* did a feature on just how mainstream belief in St. Cloud was that it should stop accepting immigrants. —HANNAH JONES



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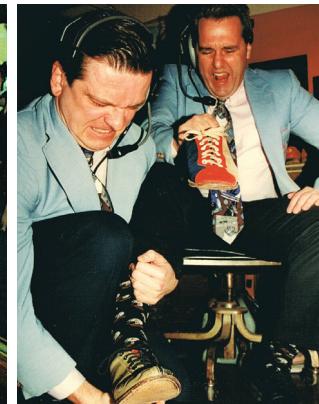
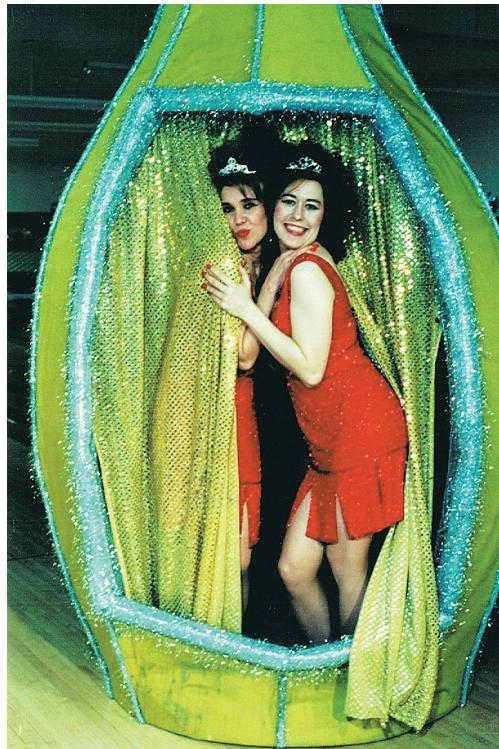
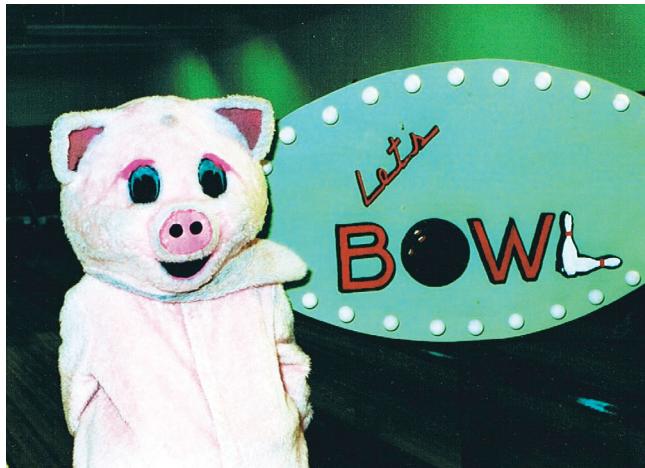
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Let's BOWL

How Minnesota's weirdest game show made it to prime time in the early '00s

By CHARLIE GILLMER

IT'S SPRING, 1995. A handful of people file into Bryant-Lake Bowl's tiny theater to watch a pilot for *Let's Bowl*. Through the magic of film, the audience is transported just a few feet away to the venue's bowling lanes.

The host is Ernie Wilson (John Brady), a smarmy, chain-smoking, Hugh Hefner type. He introduces the crew: affable musical director Trip Stevenson (Drew Jansen); the Prize Twins, two women with big hair, sashes, and tiaras; and play-by-play man Steve "Chopper" Sedahl.

Then color commentator Wally Bungherdt (Rich Kronfeld) shows up. He's awkward and frantic, gripping the microphone of his headset, nervously rocking back and forth. He announces that the bowling alley gave him "a stool that's just killing my ass to sit on."

The show proclaims that people are competing for big wins. The bowling commences. The two bowlers, "J.R. from Minneapolis" and "Mark from Brooklyn Park," aren't very good. J.R. repeatedly bounces his ball down the lane.

Wally can't stop laughing about how "Mark from Brooklyn Park" rhymes, and he makes a few dated "who shot J.R.?" jokes. "He's got the concentration, but he doesn't have the skill," he says of J.R.,

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TIM SCOTT

WHEN YOU GO TO A HORSE RACE AND A CONCERT BREAKS OUT.



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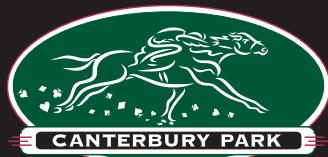
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whom he accidentally refers to as Mark. Steve also screws up a few calls, often suggesting that a roll looks good only to have it knock down a few pins.

The bowlers finish with a score of 123 to 118. Mark from Brooklyn Park wins. Butch Todd (Nick Schenk), a creepy slob in tattered coveralls, brings him his prize: a 2.5-gallon jug of laundry detergent. Taking second place, J.R. scores a four-pound can of Starkist tuna.

This was the pilot for a show that would eventually make it all the way to primetime on Comedy Central. But first, it needed to make it to a public access channel.

REWIND BACK TO 1986. Tim Scott was working on *Bowlerama*, a Twin Cities-based show that pit serious local bowlers against each other for humble prizes like Schmidt beer coolers. While Scott didn't care much for bowling, the gig would send him down a path. "I did like the idea of a bowling show that wasn't straight and was more like a comedy," he says.

A few years later, he was on his way to finding his cast. Scott had landed a job as a contributing writer on *Mystery Science Theatre 3000*. Joel Hodgson, the star of that show, invited him to a party at Rich Kronfeld's house, where he would find his leading man.

At the time, Kronfeld was known about town for playing "Dr. Sphincter" on *Tightline*, a local cable access show. The

Lisa Given, Rick Kronfeld, Steve Sedahl, Amanda Brewer Valley, and Drew Jansen

character was a repressed, angry, ultra-right-wing fanatic who would interview guests, typically a fake author, in the style of an intellectual talk show that would eventually devolve into relentless grilling.

"It was kind of like Stephen Colbert's show, except it was with this real extreme kind of character," says Kronfeld.

Tightline and Dr. Sphincter caught on locally. The Twin Cities Reader voted it the best locally produced show of 1990, and in a 1992 issue of City Pages Jim Walsh called Sphincter "the king of cable comedy."

"I thought Dr. Sphincter [would make] a great bowling commentator," says Scott. "We both gravitated toward the imperfect, flawed, odd, troubled, dark characters in life. The ugly and the strange."

Kronfeld was on board right away. While Dr. Sphincter's politics didn't make it into his new character, Wally Bungherdt (later renamed Wally Hotvedt), the voice and the intensity did.

Next, Wally needed a straight man. On-air personality Steve Sedahl, whom Scott had met while working at Cable Value Network, was their guy. From there, Scott hired a musician (Drew Jansen, an *MST3K* writer and a musical director at Brave New Workshop), a host (John Brady), and a writer (Nick Schenk).

With the crew coming together, they now needed a location to shoot the pilot. Scott talked with Danny Schmitz at Bryant-Lake Bowl and convinced him to let them film at the venue and screen the pilot in their theater.

While the reception was positive at that test screening, it would be two more years before more *Let's Bowl* episodes were made. The next step would be to raise funds.

During that time, Scott continued to work on the project. He found a more permanent film location at Stahl House Lanes in St. Paul, scored use of the TV truck that handled St. Paul Saints games, and secured funds through a sponsorship deal with Special Export beer.

Now that they had more cash, Scott was able to bring the crew back for new episodes. A few minor changes were made, too. Since filming the pilot, Brady had moved to L.A., and Jansen's character was renamed Ernie. The "Prize Twins" became the "Queen Pins." The extra money also allowed for musical guests, including the VibroChamps and Interstate Judy. There was also money for a new segment, called "Inside Bowling."

"Inside Bowling," to me, was really the heart of it," says Sedahl.

Some "Inside Bowling" segments looked into the bowling world or went behind the scenes. Sometimes they had nothing to do with either of those things; one skit reflected on Wally's time in Flock of Seagulls while another was a montage following the two commentators as they terrorized the city on Halloween.

The most notorious "Inside Bowling" segment was the one where Wally and Steve demonstrated how to properly dispose of a bowling ball. Methods included throwing the ball in a ditch, painting it like a soccer ball, throwing it in a lake, and putting it on a neighbor's sewer vent.

Segments like these really let Kronfeld go wild as Wally, where he would do things like fight people on the street, eat an entire sheet cake, or destroy the bathroom while touring a bowling-shoe factory.

"Kronfeld would nail that every time," says Scott. "He could do that range of sad, pitiful, desperate, angry, and flying off the handle."

Jansen also got to demonstrate his chops in one of the show's most beloved bits, "The Many Loves of Ernie Jansen."

"They rented this huge house out in Eden Prairie or somewhere in that area, and they had this woman, an artist from Excelsior named Phyllis Weiner, of all things, and they decided that she was my sugar mama," he recalls.

In the skit, Ernie shares all the things he loves in his life, including his new wife, his new SUV, his turquoise rocks, his spoon collection, the traps he sets up in his backyard, and his voiceover work for adult videos. The segment ended with a passionate makeout session.

In these new episodes, the show was also more creative with the competition part. There was an episode where two convicts, watched very closely by guards, bowled against each other for prizes they had no chance of using. First place was dinner for two at Old Country Buffet, and second place was 20 pounds of spuds.

In another episode, a regular guy and a dude dressed as a gladiator bowled against each other—and no one acknowledged the gladiator's attire. Another had a 6-year-old kid bowling against a professional.

The bigger budget also meant they could add a mascot.

"We searched for the worst costume we could find," remembers Scott.

What they found was a pig costume. No funny bits or cutesy details, just a pig.

To fill the costume, they recruited Matt Sarazine, whose mom, Berni, worked behind the scenes on the show. "We don't care," Scott told Sarazine of his job duties. "Just walk around in the background. Don't even do anything that remotely looks like a mascot. Sit around, walk in the frame, and just stand there motionless, like a ghost."

When Scott took these episodes to channel 23, original home of *MST3K*, he was turned away. Next, he tried KXLI, channel 41. The station agreed to air the program if they could keep the revenue from 10 commercial spots.

Now that *Let's Bowl* was an actual television show, they needed to find an audience. They decided to try some tech-savvy promotions.

"The internet at that time was very new, but I went out and I got the domain letsbowl.com," says Sedahl.

A superfandom soon formed. A fan club, dubbed the Alley Cats, helped build a community around the program. Viewers could also talk to Scott directly; the phone number displayed during episodes was actually his home number. Scott says the messages left on his answering machine were mostly positive, though he'd occasionally get something along the lines of, "If I meet you I'm going to punch you in the face."

After building up a catalog of seven episodes on channel 41, Scott and Kronfeld began pitching to bigger networks. They took the show to Comedy Central, HBO, and others, but no one was willing to buy it.

Not ready to give up yet, they found another pitch they could make. Nate Dungan, frontman of the band Trailer Trash, had previously helped the show secure advertisers. He knew of a big opportunity: The media wing of the Anheuser-Busch corporation was coming to the Twin Cities to meet with radio and TV stations to figure out their advertising for the year.

Since Special Export had been helpful through their early episodes, the *Let's Bowl* crew were hopeful that Busch could pro-

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In the new and expanding field of CBD products in Minnesota and the U.S. generally, finding a source for quality products can be a challenge.

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Accreditation is another method Brown relies on to seek only the best the CBD industry offers. The brands Nothing But Hemp works with are all verified at each release of a new batch of products by certified third-party analysis labs.

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"It's definitely a time commitment, but something that needs to be done on every new batch. It's working with those companies that are well-established and have a customer base that loves them, but never taking your eye off the ball," Steven said.

Stringent, selective processes can be present challenges, but Brown said these are well worth it. The result? Nothing But Hemp customers have the advantage of knowing they will get the best quality every time they visit our website or locations.

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vide more funding. "The meeting agenda looked something like: Minnesota Twins, Minnesota Vikings, KQRS, *Let's Bowl*," Scott recalls.

"By the end of that day, they are spreadsheet- and numbered-out," Dungan warned them.

So they decided to go big.

"We went into the room early and we hid all our props behind sofas and in the closets," says Scott.

Sedahl and Kronfeld, in character, gave the presentation. "I was doing the straight bit and Kronfeld was doing this whole convoluted slideshow complete with a projector and slides," Sedahl recalls.

"I was complaining about my neighbor," Kronfeld says, "because he kept leaving his garage door open and it was driving me crazy."

"Sedahl had to grab the remote control for the slide projector out of his hands and speed through all of Kronfeld's slides that he put in that were showing bombing runs on Dresden," says Scott.

The bold move worked. They were invited to Chicago for another meeting, where they eventually procured \$30,000. The money bought them six new episodes, but also gave them some additional leverage in negotiating.

"Just on a whim I took it to KARE 11," says Kronfeld, "Surprisingly, I got a call back." The director of programming liked the show, and wanted it to run after *Saturday Night Live*. Because KARE 11 had a Busch advertising contract of their own, they let the show keep more of the advertising slots than a show of *Let's Bowl*'s caliber would typically have been able to ask for.

Now that *Let's Bowl* had a bigger following and a shiny new pilot (featuring musical guest Soul Asylum), Scott and Kronfeld went back to Comedy Central for their fourth try, and they were finally picked up.

"They said it tested better than any pilot they had ever made at that point in time," says Kronfeld.

It was exactly what the network was looking for. "[Comedy Central] wanted a game show, and we came along at the right time," he says. "And we were super cheap compared to their other shows."

Let's Bowl was picked up for a 10-episode season, airing at 9:30 p.m. on Sundays, right between *The Man Show* and *South Park*. It had originally been slated for a late-night slot, but the numbers from the test audience were enough to push it into primetime.

But with the better time slot came more expectations. To the cast and crew, *Let's Bowl* was always a comedy/variety show that happened to be in a bowling alley. Comedy Central, on the other hand, viewed it as a comedy sports show. This meant the competition had to carry more weight on the new installments. The executives,

enamored with an earlier episode where a divorced couple bowed to see who got possession of their microwave, decided they wanted the program built around two people settling some sort of dispute, *People's Court*-style... with bowling.

This handcuffed the creativity of the show, says Kronfeld. "We never should've front-loaded that pretense onto it, because it was better if every match was different and kind of just ridiculous and meaningless."

While Kronfeld remembers the network meddling with some of the material they wrote ("We would do things that weren't anywhere near as risqué or obnoxious as *South Park* and they would say, 'No, you can't do that.'"), Comedy Central's money also came with perks for the cast and crew.

"Comedy Central was the only time I got paid," admits Sedahl.

WHILE THEY HAD TO make some concessions with the network, they weren't completely under Comedy Central's thumb. One way the show was able to keep out of the network's complete grip was by filming in Minnesota. While Ernie's intro claimed the show was broadcast "from the fabulous Stardust Lanes in Minneapolis, Minnesota," all of the episodes were actually shot at White Bear Bowl in White Bear Lake.

Not only was it harder for a coastal-based network to be heavily involved, it meant that the program could keep relying on Minnesota for its humor. "Let's be who we are," Sedahl recalls Scott telling everyone. "We're from Minnesota, we're proud of it, let's do it."

The contestants were all local, and prizes included things like fishing excursions, memberships to the Herring of the Month Club, and trips to places like Duluth and Door County.

When the show transitioned to Comedy Central, it also went through another casting change: The Queen Pins were played by Amanda Brewer (now Amanda Brewer Valley) and Lisa Bartholomew (now Lisa Given).

"It just seemed like the best job on earth," Valley remembers. "It was taking the piss out of something that's an American institution: the game show."

For years, women on game shows were often just silent creatures in cocktail dresses. Valley and Given had a different mission. Together the two women worked on subverting traditional gender roles in television. "These were girls who seemed like one thing on the outside but they're really something else. They're really much more calculating than you think," says Valley.

The best example of this was an "Inside Bowling" segment that explored what the Queen Pins did when they weren't



COURTESY OF TIM SCOTT

Rick Kronfeld and Steve Sedahl

working on the show: run a bait shop. Every item is overpriced, but fishermen flocked to the store, as the Pins regularly restocked items on low shelves, giving customers a lewd view.

"We were coming on right after *The Man Show* at that time," says Valley. "That segment in particular piggybacked off *The Man Show* ethos, but it kind of did it in a smart way. These weren't girls jumping on trampolines, being overtly sexual for no personal gain. We knew what we were doing."

Another part of the gig was to dance as the balls rolled toward the pins and, in some cases, to taunt the bowlers when they failed. Their dance moves were often unconventional, such as pumping invisible kegs.

The only hard part of the job was standing in a small circle at the end of the lane all day long. "If you had to go to the bathroom, you had to plan it," says Valley. "Somebody who had better shoes and not stupid lucite high heels like we wore had to come out and help us down the lane."

A few Hollywood pros also joined the program. Danny Breen, a veteran of HBO's *Not Necessarily the News*, helped write and produce the series, as did Mike Nelson, another *MST3K* alum.

New segments were added, too. Commentators would now visit the contestants at home or at work in order to go further into the dispute that would be resolved with their bowling match. Wally would ask inappropriate and off-topic questions, while Steve tried to better understand the players' conflict.

In a segment called "In the Pin," Wally and the two contestants would be locked into a large bowling pin where he would interview them in close quarters. Here Wally would do things like share daiquiris with the contestants and take off his shirt if it got too hot inside.

"We wouldn't tell the contestants [what we were going to ask]," Kronfeld remembers. "I think I sort of scared this one kid... I kept asking him if he liked to party."

Before the show aired nationally, TV Guide ran a multi-page preview, and both People and Entertainment Weekly gave it extended blurbs. The reviews were mixed, but full of bowling puns.

"Bottom Line: Leaves the tenpin," said People. They did appreciate the Minnesota vibe, admitting that "there's something to be said for any show that so relishes middle-American oddity."

The cast also remembers Dennis Miller saying good things about the show, but fellow Comedy Central employee Jon Stewart was not a fan.

"Oh, he despised it, which I love," says Jansen.

Still, there was enough goodwill toward the show that it was picked up for a second 10-episode season before the first had even aired.

After the initial surge of press, *Let's Bowl* continued as any other show on Comedy Central, airing in its time slot and popping up in reruns and marathons on occasion.

"But the ratings did go up and down a bit," says Kronfeld. "I had a bad feeling about it."

Let's Bowl never made it past its two 10-episode seasons. There was no dramatic fight to stay on the air, and no sudden cancellation. The show just wasn't picked up after its second season.

"It should've stayed in late night," Kronfeld says. "That's where its humor would've been appreciated."

It was more than just inconsistent ratings that had brought the program to an end, however. Mike Maddocks, its original supporter at Comedy Central, was no longer in a position to trumpet

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the program. "We knew that there had been a change at Comedy Central and that the new team in charge of programming didn't care for the show," says Jansen.

"Comedy Central was emerging from a quirky little boutique network to a massive one," says Scott. "The campy, crappy shows were no longer the flavor."

AFTER CANCELLATION, everyone went their separate ways. However, decades later, the show continues to follow them.

Sedahl, now living in North Carolina, recently learned that one of his co-workers got through his wisdom teeth removal by watching a *Let's Bowl* marathon. Jansen, who tours with a Chicago-based Carpenters tribute band, learned that one of his bandmates, who had no idea

“

**LET'S BE WHO
WE ARE. WE'RE
FROM MINNESOTA,
WE'RE PROUD
OF IT, LET'S DO IT.**

”

that Jansen was on *Let's Bowl*, used to watch the show. "You feel like a rockstar for a nanosecond," he says. "Then you realize you're in a hotel in Terre Haute, Indiana."

Kronfeld's current line of work is running Kronfeld Motors. Among the company's inventions is a "human-electric hybrid vehicle" that can reach speeds of up to 90 mph. People still come up to him and do his character's voice, which he appreciates.

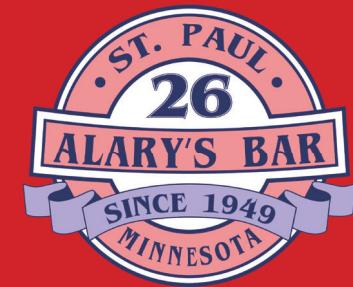
"It was like going to summer camp every day, except at our summer camp you stood underneath lights and you got to do a TV show," says Valley. "And you didn't have to make any shitty crafts." She says that she is so fond of her time on the show that she wants it mentioned in her obituary.

Would a show like *Let's Bowl* even be possible today? "At that time, [getting on national television] was sort of the pinnacle; that was what you strove for," Jansen says.

Kronfeld thinks something as "off-off-Hollywood" as *Let's Bowl* could find a place on a streaming service now.

Until that happens—if it ever does—the world will have to settle for YouTube clips.

"It ran for two seasons; most shows don't make it to that," says Drew. "For a weird, cheap, delightfully crappy show, that's a pretty good legacy." **CP**



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BY SARAH BRUMBLE & EMILY CASSEL

Hey, What's the Deal With... is a new City Pages series that asks: Hey, what's the deal with that?

Our first HWTDW came from Reddit, specifically r/TwinCities, where u/ArrayzStartAtZero wants to know: "What is the red light for at Surly Brewing?"

Todd the Axe Man? More like Todd the Ask Man!

Maybe you've noticed them, too—the red and yellow lights outside the brewery's Malcolm Avenue compound (plus another set inside, by the host stand). Sometimes they're dark, but sometimes they're lit, glowing steadily or flashing on and off.

We're usually pretty lit while we're sipping Surlys in the beer garden too, which might be why we never thought to ask anyone what, exactly, those lights mean. Until today.

"Here's the short answer for why it's there," Surly's senior PR and communications manager Tiffany Jackson writes in an email. "The lights serve as a reminder to visitors that this truly is a production brewery and serves to connect them to that process. If it's flashing red, beer is being brewed while you enjoy your Furious and pizza. Have another, we're making more."

And there you have it. But since we're always one for the long answer, we got Surly head brewer Ben Smith on the horn to talk specifics.

"If that red light's on, it means we're actively brewing, so we've got a batch of Furious, Xtra Citra, Grapefruit Supreme, whatever moving through the brew house," Smith explains. The lights can also indicate assorted operational goings-on, like a tank that's being cleaned.

Steady yellow: good. Blinking yellow? Maaaybe not so good.

The lights also tell brewers when there's an operator request. "If you're inside the brew house, there's a big horn that goes off, basically telling the brewer to get off his ass and do something," Smith chuckles, "whether it's adding hops, adding some brewing salts, starting to pump wort into the cellar... those are all things that you have to get up and manually do."

In those situations, the red light will be on, but the yellow light will be flashing too.

"Alternatively, if something goes wrong and we have a major error... that also will flash," Smith adds. It can be a tip for tour guides too—a silent indicator about what's happening inside so they know what to

HEY, WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH...?

Our new series seeks to answer your most nagging, trivial questions



SARAH BRUMBLE

expect before taking a group behind the scenes. "When we're not doing anything, that yellow standby light is on."

That flashing yellow should only go off for about a minute max—the operator can hit a button to clear it away. If it's blinking for more than a couple minutes... that's usually not a great sign. "Even if I'm having lunch or here with family on the weekend and it starts flashing, it gives me anxiety," Smith laughs. "I always know what's happening, for better or worse."

He continues: "It's fun, when I drive up I always know if something's happening, if something's wrong. It's funny, at 7 o'clock, I'll be driving in, and if that yellow light's flashing I just go, 'Oh no, what's going on?' If it's just red, I'm like, 'Oh. Sweet.'"

Item number two on our list of trivialish questions plaguing the populace came from in-house. Many of us here at City Pages HQ hail from south Minneapolis near A Baker's Wife, a warm spot we hold close to where our hearts once resided.

If you, like us, have made your midsections doughy thanks to pastries from this

By that point in our conversation, Shogren, too, was hooked on the chase. While she volunteered to do some sleuthing on her own time, we cased the joint IRL [read: we needed a doughnut]. Doing so revealed a sticker on one of the signs bearing the name of local sign company Schad-Tracy.

Via phone, Schad-Tracy's Rick Ballantyne sounded befuddled when the signs weren't ringing any bells. "I've been here for 24 years, but... I'll see what I can find in our archives. It might take a little bit because they're up in the rafters." Just before signing off he acquiesced, "We don't want mysteries!"

After a few days and "a bunch of digging," Ballantyne responded with anti-answers: "We cannot find any paperwork on this location. [The owners] do not remember this job at all, and with the tall Y they think they would have remembered that. We are thinking that someone used one of our raceways [a technical term for a very specific sign part, which here means 'we didn't really do this'] and installed some letters on the raceway and that is why our name is on it."

When we revisited the subject with Shogren, she informed us that she, too, had come up empty: "Still no new info. All I know is that it had been put up this way 30 years ago," she said, repeating promises to let us know if she hears from previous owners.

Ultimately, in this digital age, when so little remains unknown, perhaps the hazy origin of A Baker's Wife's wonky signage is actually a rarity? Maybe the Why's of Y's simply aren't always answerable, which makes them all the more fun in this (harmless) circumstance?

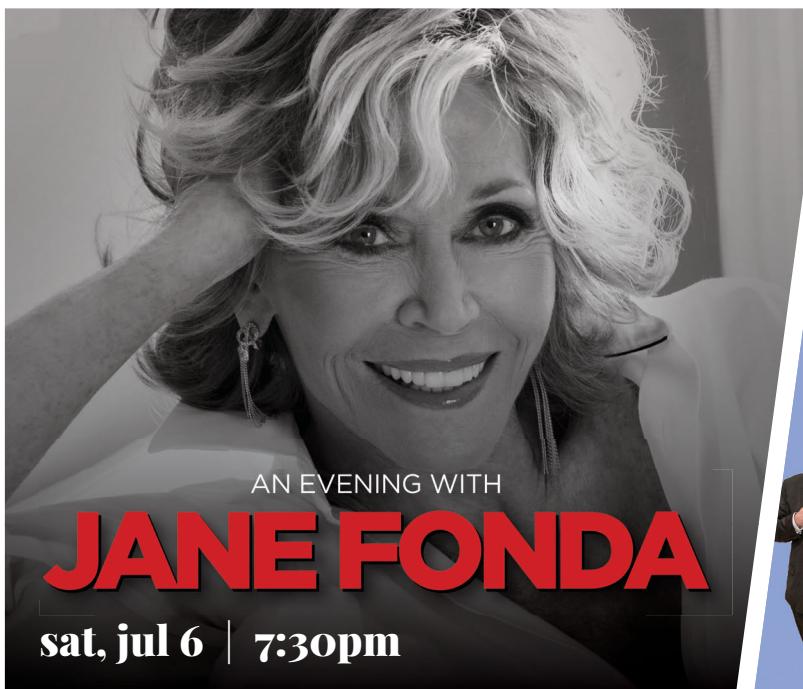
And yet, dear reader, this is where you choose how this story ends. If you, like Ballantyne, aren't prone to enjoying mysteries, please do send us any clues you may have about the origin of the bakery's giant Y's. This should include shameful confessions of how your childhood friend threw rocks at the sign, only for the new Y to grow back monstrously larger—a pet theory with, admittedly, zero legs.

We, uh, not-so-secretly still wanna know the deal...

In Hey, What's the Deal With... we're tackling everyday oddities, random curiosities, and what-the-actual-fuck mysteries about life in the Twin Cities. Got a pressing but somewhat trivial Q about something you saw, heard, or thought about while stuck in traffic? Email us, and our crack investigative team just might try to figure it out. ☕

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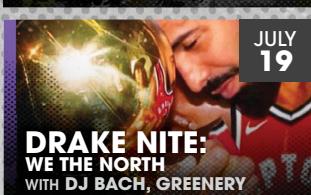
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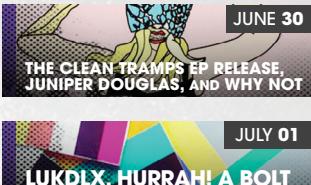
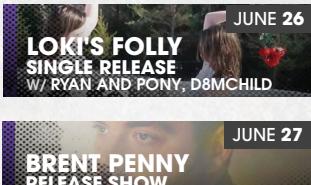
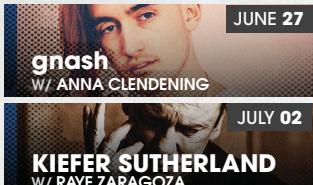
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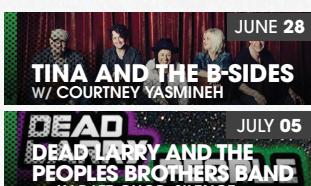
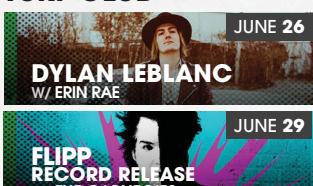
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FINE LINE



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AROUND TOWN



A LIST

FRIDAY Bit-O-Honey becomes a beer **p. 20**

SATURDAY A skate party at Able Seedhouse **p. 20**

SUNDAY Cat art at A-Mill **p. 21**

WEDNESDAY 6.26

BARHOPPING/FILM

VAMPIRE'S KISS

BRUNSON'S PUB

When *Vampire's Kiss* came out in 1989, a New York Times reviewer stated that "the film is dominated and destroyed by Mr. Cage's chaotic, self-indulgent performance." If you're familiar with Nicolas Cage's all-or-nothing acting style, then you probably know exactly what this critic is talking about. You can also assume that the actor is giving us an iconic performance. In this cinematic bomb (that eventually went on to become a cult classic), Cage plays a high-strung yuppie. When a bat flies into his apartment during a booze-fueled sex session, he's intrigued to discover that he finds the ordeal arousing. A few days later, a kinkster/blood drinking lady (Jennifer Beals) bites his neck, and his journey into vampirism—and insanity—begins, complete with plastic vampire teeth. Thank god there will be beer at this screening, which is part of *Trash Film Debauchery's Traveling Picture Show* series. This summer they'll be sharing shitty films with us at various bars in the Twin Cities. Upcoming events include *Showgirls* at MacKenzie's Pub and *Death Bed: The Bed That Eats* at Palmer's Bar. 8:30 p.m. Free. 956 Payne Ave., St. Paul; 651-447-2483. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

FESTIVAL/THEATER

GREAT RIVER SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

WINONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Every summer, the Great River Shakespeare Festival turns Winona's bluff country into the setting for a selection of Shakespeare plays and contemporary selections curated around a common theme. This year's topics, says artistic director Doug Scholz-Carlson, include forgiveness and reconciliation. The plays include *Macbeth* ("I guess our catchphrase is 'bloody good fun'"), *Cymbeline*, a new adaptation of Carlo Goldoni's *The Servant of Two Masters*, Nilaja Sun's *No Child...*, and a highly unusual show by a playwright who

Watch Nic Cage chew scenery and other questionable things with *Trash Film Debauchery*.



VAMPIRE'S KISS

for years wasn't allowed to leave Iran because he refused to do his obligatory military service. Nassim Soleimanpour's *White Rabbit Red Rabbit* is performed each time by a single actor who's never read the script; the performer opens a sealed envelope, and everyone in the theater keeps the play's contents a secret. "We have themes that connect the shows together," says Scholz-Carlson, "but we're really talking about what it is to be a human being." Find tickets and more details at grsf.org. \$10-\$49. 121 E. Third St., Winona; 507-474-7900. **Through August 4 —JAY GABLER**

COMEDY

SHANE TORRES

ACME COMEDY CO.

Growing up in Fort Worth, Texas, Shane Torres was a comedy fan, but didn't see any avenue to pursue it as a career in his hometown. Tending bar and partying in his early 20s, he longed for more. "I could see myself doing that forever, and I didn't want that, so I got in my car and left," he says. "I went to

San Francisco to study music." He did make it to Northern California, but his plan didn't work out. "I was going to take voice lessons," he says, "but it turns out I'm not a very good singer." While he enjoyed playing in bands in high school, taking it more seriously wasn't fun at all. A friend told him he should join her in Portland, so he did. There he fell into the same old rut of tending bar and partying, until the night he wandered into a comedy club. Intrigued, he signed up for an open mic. "I got very lucky," he says. "It changed my life." Today, he's logged several TV appearances and headlines clubs across the country. 8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday; 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. \$15-\$18. 708 N. First St., Minneapolis; 612-338-6393. **Through Saturday —P.F. WILSON**

THURSDAY 6.27

COMEDY

JOHN LEGUIZAMO

HISTORIC STATE THEATRE

A lecture might sound like a sedate affair, unless the instructor happens to be the

charismatic, seemingly inexhaustible John Leguizamo. A prolific actor on stage and screen, Leguizamo has portrayed an eclectic range of roles, but his most recent one-man show, the acclaimed *Latin History for Morons*, is a revelatory work of cultural insight and social urgency. Appalled by the dearth of Latino figures in American history textbooks, Leguizamo envisioned the piece as a humorous but heartfelt corrective to the whitewashed accounts that relegate a rich heritage to the narrowest margins of our collective identity (if not omitting their contributions altogether). Calling upon his dynamic performance style, Leguizamo morphs throughout the presentation, from erudite to manic, all the while keeping his attention centered on the reclamation of a culture's purloined legacy. While indignation does arise during the occasional rant, Leguizamo is more intent on illuminating the importance of representation with all of the tools in his repertoire, including his skills as a standup comic. Following a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 ▶

Tin Whiskers continues to be inspired by local candy makers Pearson's.



CONTINUED FROM THURSDAY ▶

critically lauded run on Broadway, this Minneapolis stop on Leguizamo's national tour promises an evening of cultural appreciation delivered with insightful hilarity. 7:30 p.m. \$49-\$109. 805 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-339-7007. —BRAD RICHASON

CATS

CAT TOUR 2019

MUELLER PARK

If you've ever taken a walk through the Wedge neighborhood, you've probably inadvertently made eye contact with a cat. Kitties gazing out from screened windows are as much a part of the area as hipsters on bikes, a packed patio at Leaning Tower, and the Hum's neon sign. This week, expert cat tour guide Chet Wedgely will return for the third year in a row to take folks on a feline journey, pointing out the best cats in the 'hood. Hosted by local news source (and iconic twitter account) Wedge LIVE, this 1.5-mile walking tour may include Ricketts, a gray, leash-lovin' kitty; Nanette Cleopatra Philavant, an "orange, long-haired diva queen"; and Smokey, a cat who once broke an old window. Residents in the area looking for local cat fame can register their pets to possibly be included in the tour at wedgelive.com. Get there early for limited-edition buttons. 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. 2500 Bryant Ave. S., Minneapolis. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

FRIDAY 6.28

BARHOPPING

BIT-O-HONEY BLONDE TAP RELEASE

TIN WHISKERS BREWING CO.

While a beer and candy company collab might sound like something Willy Wonka would do if he was peddling sweets to adults, we assure you that this beer is

very real. St. Paul brewery Tin Whiskers is teaming up with Minnesota sweets shiller Pearson's Candy Company for a very special mashup of light ale and Bit-O-Honey. The resulting brew, Bit-O-Honey Blonde, should be an easy-to-drink summertime treat, with a hint of the beloved taffy, which is made with the sweet stuff and almonds. This Friday, the new brew will be on tap for those to try, or pick up a growler to take home. The crew will have the infamous candy on hand, too, so you can try it paired with the beer. 3 to 11 p.m. Free. 125 Ninth St. E., Unit 127, St. Paul; 651-330-4734. —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

SPORTS

2019 USA TAEKWONDO CHAMPIONSHIPS

MINNEAPOLIS CONVENTION CENTER

In its undiluted form in which combatants attack and counter with exacting agility and lightning-quick kicks, taekwondo proves a thrilling spectacle. Twin Cities audiences will have a chance to witness the sport's signature maneuvers as the Minneapolis Convention Center plays host to the 2019 USA Taekwondo Championships. Organized by the national governing board of taekwondo in the United States (the group responsible for overseeing Olympic participation), the weeklong event will showcase some 4,000 athletes competing to be the best in their respective divisions. Matches will offer a vast spectrum of aspiring champions, from promising neophytes to seasoned fighters, in a wide range of classes segmented by age, sex, weight, and skill levels. The event also features a fascinating roster of sparring sessions and board-breaking demonstrations. Having not had a USA Taekwondo event in the area since 2002 (when the Metrodome hosted the Junior Olympics Taekwondo Championships), Twin

Cities audiences are overdue for an exhibition of the exceptional athleticism required to reach the top of this exacting martial art. 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day. \$11-\$16 day pass; \$84 all event pass. 1301 Second Ave. S., Minneapolis. Through July 4 —BRAD RICHASON

THEATER

GUYS AND DOLLS

GUTHRIE THEATER

Adapted from a series of stories by Damon Runyon, *Guys and Dolls* is set in a highly stylized version of Midtown Manhattan in the 1930s. The musical follows the parallel paths of two inveterate gamblers, Sky Masterson and Nathan Detroit, as they attempt to mount an epic underground craps game while simultaneously beating the odds at romance. For Nathan, that means coming to terms with his feelings for nightclub performer Miss Adelaide, his long-suffering fiancée of 14 years. By contrast, Sky's wooing of the morally upright Sarah Brown, leader of the charitable Save-a-Soul Mission, is founded on a wager. Befitting the heightened sentiments of musical romances, Sky and Sarah are soon swooning over one another to the enchanting tunes of Frank Loesser. Ideally positioned as a summer crowd-pleaser, this Kent Gash-directed production is sure to pay off in spectacular fashion thanks to an ensemble headlined by Jeremiah James, Olivia Hernandez, Rodney Gardiner, and Kirsten M. Wyatt. The show is in previews through June 27.

7:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays; 7 p.m. Sundays; check online for 1 p.m. matinees. \$34-\$93. 818 S. Second St., Minneapolis; 612-377-2224. Through August 25 —BRAD RICHASON

SATURDAY 6.29

SPORTS

UFC FIGHT NIGHT

TARGET CENTER

It's been seven long years since the Ultimate Fighting Championship brought the Octagon to Minneapolis. Fortunately, much like rap-rock music and Affliction T-shirts, dudes getting punched in the face never goes out of style. This Saturday night, former heavyweight champion Junior dos Santos will go toe-to-toe with Francis "the Predator" Ngannou at the main event of UFC Fight Night in what is likely to decide who gets the next crack at the current UFC champ. The 13-fight card also includes superstars like Joseph Benavidez, Demian Maia, and Mankato's own Dan "the Hitman" Moret. Splitting his time between Minnesota Martial Arts Academy and the MMA Lab in Arizona, Moret is a submission specialist, with eight tap-outs in his 13 career victories. He'll meet Jared "Flash" Gordon in a lightweight bout on the preliminary portion of the card, which will be broadcast live on ESPN. Seeing as how the last time UFC came to town we were in the first term of the Obama era, this could be your last chance to bring the pain and witness a hometown brawl in the Octagon for quite some time. 5 p.m.

FRIDAY

COMEDY

PAY GAP COMEDY TOUR

PARKWAY THEATER

Mary Jo Pehl is a Twin Cities comedy legend. Since getting her start in the 1980s, Pehl has had an iconic run on the original *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, performed countless sold-out shows, and published a number of literary works. And yet, in 2019, she's still trying to help female comics receive equal footing. "When I first got started, they would introduce me as, 'Our next performer is a female comedian!' Like they had to tell the audience to buckle their seatbelts because the mood in the room was about to change," she says. While the local comedy scene has evolved, women in comedy face the same challenges as those in most other industries, including the ever-present pay gap. To help fight back, Pehl, along with fellow comedians Shannan Paul, Carolyn Pool, Shanan Custer, Tiffany Norton, Ellie Hino, and Khadijah Cooper, are forming a comedy super group for one night only to help support organizations dedicated to stopping violence against women. "I love that it's not all standup," Pehl says. "It has a real variety-show vibe. I totally love it. We've got a variety of different comics who talk about different things, and who are at different points in our careers." While the show is made up of all women, Pehl says the beauty of the event is that it is elevating the audience as much as it is the performers. "It's important to have shows where everyone is represented. It's not about being a female show, or compartmentalized in any way. It also elevates the audience's expectations that it's just about coming to hear people be funny." \$30-\$40. 7:30 p.m. 4814 Chicago Ave., Minneapolis; 612-822-8080. —PATRICK STRAIT



COURTESY OF MARY JO PEHL

A-LIST

The gang's all here again.



NAPOLEON DYNAMITE

\$80-\$175. 600 First Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-673-0900. —PATRICK STRAIT

FILM/TALKS

NAPOLEON DYNAMITE

ORDWAY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

When we last saw them, Uncle Rico had found love, Pedro was class president, and... what did happen to Napoleon Dynamite in the end? This Saturday, the stars of this cinematic masterpiece will gather at the Ordway to talk about the 2004 film that changed their lives. Fans can pre-game by taking selfies with Jerry the Llama or by enrolling in the trivia competition. Then they can watch a special screening of the flick and partake in a Q&A with Jon Heder (Napoleon), Efren Ramirez (Pedro), and Jon Gries (Uncle Rico), moderated by local instigator Miss Shannan Paul. Asian Invasion and Adams Gyros will serve food at Rice Park before the party, but you'll have to find your own tots. 7:30 p.m. \$48-\$58. 345 Washington St., St. Paul; 651-224-4222. —LOREN GREEN

PARTY

HIP-HOP ARCHITECTURE NEIGHBORHOOD CELEBRATION

SPRINGBOARD

What is hip-hop architecture? Come to Springboard for the Arts' new space to find out. In "Close to the Edge: The Birth of Hip-Hop Architecture," Sekou Cooke, assistant professor at the Syracuse University School of Architecture, has curated an exhibition of 21 designers, researchers, and students who are a part of the emerging movement. This Saturday, featured artist James Garrett, a recipient of the 2019 national AIA Young Architects Award and principal of 4RM+ULA architecture, will be presenting in the space as part of a neighborhood block party. Juxtaposition Arts is also part of the event. This is a chance to check out this exhibition, which is getting national attention, and hear from

experts on what the movement is all about. 5 to 8 p.m. Free. 262 University Ave. W., St. Paul. —SHEILA REGAN

PARTY

NO DOY: A SKATE-SURF BEACH PARTY

ABLE SEEDHOUSE & BREWERY

This Saturday, Able Seedhouse & Brewery is turning its parking lot into a rad party celebrating all things skate and surf. Watch people attempt various moves and check out gear from the likes of 3rd Lair, Cal Surf, Zombie Boardshop, Obsolete Skateboards, and others. The party will also celebrate the release of No Doy, Able's new sour beer with notes of pink guava and mango, while Animales Barbeque will serve up eats. Proceeds from the party will benefit City of Skate, a group of skateboarders and parents working on building more skateparks in the cities (their most recent effort being Juxtaposition Arts' new skate plaza) and improving the ones we already have. All ages. 3 to 9 p.m. Free; \$5 to drink. 1121 Quincy St. NE, Minneapolis; 612-405-4642. —JESSICA ARMBRISTER

SUNDAY 6.30

CATS

MYSTERY OF CATS: CAT ART FESTIVAL

A-MILL ARTIST LOFTS

End your weekend with a cat party this Sunday. The daylong event will feature a variety of artwork inspired by kitties, including adorable paintings, sparkly jewelry, and punk-rock cat pillows (yes, that's a thing). Feline-themed music and videos will screen throughout the day, and folks can watch Charlene Perkey create cat artwork live. Other festivities include face painting for kids, hands-on craft activities, tarot readings, and a silent auction for Diabetic Cat Help. Noon to 8 p.m. Free; donations accepted. 315 SE Main St., Minneapolis. —JESSICA ARMBRISTER

A promotional image for Crooners Supper Club. The top half features the Crooners logo with a stylized yellow 'C' and the text "CROONERS SUPPER CLUB". Below this, a dark banner reads "ON THE BORDER OF MINNEAPOLIS, AT THE CENTER OF THE TWIN CITIES MUSIC SCENE". The middle section shows nine small images of musicians performing, each with a date and name: July 1 Renee Austin Band (Soul-Blues-Country-Roots Vocals), June 27 Robert Robinson & Gwen Matthews (The Music of Roberta Flack & Donny Hathaway), July 5 Scottie Miller Band (Funky Soul-Blues), July 1 Galactic Cowboy Orchestra, July 2 Dee Miller Band (Barrelhouse Soul-Blues), July 5 Mick Sterling (Mick & The Stones), July 6 Debbie Duncan (MN's First Lady of Song), July 12 Dirty Sexy Riot (Heavy Metal Burlesque), July 15 Reel Big Fish & Aquabats!, July 19 Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, and Sept. 14 UB40. The bottom section features the text "Dinner • Cocktails • Concerts", "BOX OFFICE 763-760-0062", and "TICKETS CROONERSMN.COM".

A promotional image for Cabooze. The top half features the Cabooze logo. The middle section shows a grid of 12 images for various events: "PLAZA SHOW" (go fest), "JUN 28 Catfish and the Bottlemen & X Ambassadors", "JUN 29 Megan Hamilton EP Release", "JUL 6 Slip N Slide at the Chev Suits DJ Phox Space Munk", "JUL 12 Dirty Sexy Riot Heavy Metal Burlesque", "JUL 15 Reel Big Fish & Aquabats!", "JUL 19 Bone Thugs-N-Harmony", "JUL 20 White Water Ramble and Feed The Dog", "AUG 3 Jerry Garcia Remembered", "SEPT 14 UB40", and "JUST ANNOUNCED The Lacs & Black Stone Cherry". The bottom section features the text "The Whiskey Junction", "6/29 Hoodphellas: The music of Phish", "7/1 Class System w. Victory, Bad Idea", "7/5 Bob Pat Band", "7/10 Chris Davies & The Promise Band", "7/12 Mike Blood Fist", "7/13 Don Durkee Memorial", "TICKETS: WWW.CABOOZE.COM 917 CEDAR AVE MPLS MN", and a photo of two men standing in a field.



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FILM

MORE TO THE STORY

Toy Story 4 doesn't spoil the perfect ending of the trilogy that came before it



DISNEY

BY TONY LIBERA

Trilogies seldom have perfect endings. Whether it's *Star Wars*, *The Godfather*, or Christopher Nolan's *Dark Knight* series, a third outing typically falls short of its second and leaves us unfulfilled. *Toy Story 3* was a rare achievement, shining on its own while also bolstering the saga as a whole.

Let's recap: After the toys narrowly escape incineration, owner Andy (John Morris) gives Buzz (Tim Allen) and the gang to new kid Bonnie (Emily Hahn). Then, in one of film history's more bittersweet animated gut-punches, Bonnie notices ol' Sheriff Woody (Tom Hanks) at the bottom of the toy box. Andy, all grown up but planning to take his favorite cowboy to college with him, decides to hand over Woody, too. As Andy drives away, Woody says, "So long, partner," the music swells, and the camera flies into the clouds, matching the opening bedroom shot from the original *Toy Story*. That. Is. A. Flawless. Ending.

So why screw with that? Why retie a perfect bow? Is there actually more story

to tell, or does Disney just love merchandising dollars? Thankfully, *Toy Story 4* has enough substance to serve as more than a cash grab.

We catch up with the toys a couple years after the end of the last installment. Bonnie (now voiced by Madeleine McGraw) prepares for kindergarten while Woody wrestles with the fact that she rarely plays with him anymore. When Bonnie struggles at school orientation, Woody—having snuck into her backpack—throws a spork and some other garbage on the table during arts and crafts, which Bonnie makes into her new favorite toy, Forky (Tony Hale). Cursed with new life, Forky tries to return to the garbage can again and again, which forces Woody to constantly look after him. When a family road trip and Forky's suicidal tendencies separate him from the group, Woody embarks on an odyssey of evil dolls, lost toys, and self-discovery.

The beats aren't going to be too revolutionary four entries into any franchise, but while *Toy Story 4* definitely replays some of the old hits, it also finds new material. This has really always been Woody's

TOY STORY 4
directed by Josh Cooley
area theaters, now showing

story, and the picture does a wonderful job of fleshing out the character even further. His interactions with both an old friend and a new enemy lurking inside an antique store offer surprising depth (and darkness), while additions to what was already a knockout cast give *Toy Story 4* the humor to match its heart. Tony Hale brings some of his Buster Bluth anxiety to Forky's existential crisis; Keanu Reeves expertly tackles machismo and doubt as Canuck stuntman Duke Caboom; and old pals Keegan-Michael Key and Jordan Peele team up as Ducky and Bunny to deliver, of course, the movie's biggest laughs.

Honestly, *Toy Story 4* shouldn't be as good as it is—but that's Pixar for you. And yet, part of me still wishes they'd stopped at three. There's no question that this is a good movie, and both longtime fans and newcomers will enjoy it. However, as the new coda to a larger work, *Toy Story 4* does feel like a step backward. **EP**

PEAK PAGAENTRY

A Fringe favorite stretches into a full production



PETRONELLA J. YTSMA

BY JAY GABLER

There will be blood. There will also be smoking, extensive profanity, and trace peanut allergens.

Signage at Park Square Theatre prepares visitors for a *Jefferson Township Sparkling Junior Talent Pageant* with some adult elements, which has been expanded from a production at the 2017 Minnesota Fringe Festival.

Keith Hovis—playwright, composer, and lyricist—has turned his *Junior Talent Pageant* into a full-length musical, now premiering at Park Square. There's a lot to enjoy in the new production, although its more outrageous elements are sometimes at odds with a character-driven story fighting to emerge from the satire.

The show's style and conceit evoke '90s classics *Waiting for Guffman* and *Drop Dead Gorgeous*, the latter in particular given the rural Minnesota setting. Jefferson Township, we learn, was known for its annual kids' talent competitions until 1997, when famous turned to infamous as a contestant was accidentally decapitated.

In the present day, four friends (or, perhaps, frenemies) who were there for the pageant's last iteration have reunited. Frannie (Kelly Houlehan) has moved back home after her big-city job prospects dried up. Her former crush Travis (Zach Garcia) has a hot dad bod now, and she takes a job stocking shelves with his drinking buddy Liam (Ryan London Levin).

Meanwhile, the imperious Val (Leslie Vincent) is still trading on the local celebrity

JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP SPARKLING JUNIOR TALENT PAGEANT

Park Square Theatre
20 W. Seventh Place, St. Paul
651-291-7005; through July 28

of being the last person crowned talent pageant champion. She bristles at an idea that starts as a joke between Frannie and Liam: What if the now-adult contestants restage the 1997 pageant, to finally see who would have won?

The show is a big lift for director Laura Leffler and the four-person cast (all returning from the Fringe production), who are asked to deliver a sprawling production in the close confines of the Boss Thrust Stage. Given the chamber scale, the actors can't fall back on spectacle: They need to sustain the show's increasingly dramatic swings between zany and heartfelt.

Hovis has written big, well-crafted ballads and rousing anthems for his plucky millennials, but the broadly comic, intentionally ridiculous elements repeatedly swamp any chance of us investing in the characters' emotional arcs. The result is that Val and Liam, relatively unburdened by aspirations of self-actualization, steal the show from romantic leads Frannie and Travis.

Everything seems to make sense, though, when Vincent's onstage. Fortunately, that's often. She triumphs with a deadpan performance as a cad who knows what she is; when she and Levin share a manipulative makeout, it crackles with the kind of unapologetically amoral energy this *Pageant*, at its most entertaining, embraces. **CP**



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ERIK NELSON

EXILE ON MAIN STREET

Frankie Lee returns to his gentrifying hometown and remembers Jessica Lange on *Stillwater*

BY ERICA RIVERA

Frankie Lee is an old-fashioned guy. The 36-year-old Minnesotan believes in family, community, and keeping Main Streets historic. So when he contemplated where to record the follow-up to 2015's *American Dreamer*, the suggestion of his hometown of Stillwater stuck—and became the title of the new album.

To record *Stillwater*'s somber folk tracks, Lee and his crew hunkered down in the home where his single mom raised him, his twin sister, and his older brother. The songs are stripped-down and weathered, broken-in and world-weary. They harken back to an earlier time.

"I'm more of a country-type of person," Lee says. "Like how people stay in the city and then go to the country on the weekends? I'm the opposite."

The first single off the album, "Downtown Lights," was inspired by an unexpected source: actress Jessica Lange, who was born

in Cloquet and moved to Stillwater with actor Sam Shepard in 1995. Lee worked at the co-op and saw Lange come in occasionally. "She was one of those people who was so stunningly beautiful, but present," he says. "That always left an impression on me. It wasn't like a sexual thing. It wasn't like a little boy crush. It was more like, there's a real woman. There's a real energy that comes from her. A real power. Almost like nature has."

In 2008, Lange told the New York Daily News that she left Stillwater because it became "yuppified." At some point, Lee stumbled upon that statement and, shortly thereafter, he had a dream that he walked down the deserted Main Street with Lange. In the dream, she said, "It breaks my heart. It just breaks my heart."

It breaks Lee's heart, too, to see the once-quaint place where everyone knew each other turned into a tourist trap populated by clothing boutiques, gift shops, and fast-

food joints. Working-class families can no longer afford to call it home. Instead, a new population, one that wants to live in "extremely clean and cold, almost lifeless" condos with an in-house yoga studio, has infiltrated the riverside town. "Here they are on these beautiful Main Streets with tons of history around them and they just come in and knock it all down," Lee says of the developers.

Lee has spoken with the city council, the mayor, and the historical society about his

concerns.
FRANKIE LEE'S *STILLWATER*
RELEASE SHOW
Cedar Cultural Center, Minneapolis
8 p.m. Friday, June 28

"I think
it's really
important to
not just

complain about it but be involved in where you come from and the little things you can change," he says. "I still love the town and I'm still invested in it."

Stillwater inspired another song on the album when, a couple of days before recording started, Lee ran into a man named John downtown. A concrete and construction worker Lee used to work for in high school, John had been something of a father figure to him. (Lee's father died in a motorcycle accident when he was 12.) John "was just a man about everything. He just did the work and he didn't complain. He lived a certain way. And he woke up every morning and did it again," Lee says.

The men hadn't seen one another in 20 years, and time had not been kind to John. Chemicals had eaten all the pigment from his hands, and physical labor had battered his body. He was drunk. It was a jarring shift from how Lee remembered him. The short car ride they shared made Lee think about people who just want to get by, whose hard work goes unrewarded and who get forgotten. "It's somewhat tragic but it's also very real," Lee says. That experience informed the song "(I Don't Want to Know) John."

Despite the heavy sentiments on the album, Lee considers his music reflective, not mournful. "It's not sad nor happy or somber or upbeat. It's kind of like a dream state. It kind of floats," he says. If *Stillwater* sounds solemn, that wasn't his intention. "I'm really much more joyful than that," he says.

But musically, Lee prefers subtlety. He doesn't want his lyrics to tell listeners what to think, or to say something just because it's catchy. Instrumentally, he avoids beating the listener over the head with electric guitar or drum beats. He's more interested in music that speaks to an honest day's work,



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MUSIC

the beauty of the natural world, and the complexities of love. "You write from your own experience and kind of the smaller you get, the more universal it seems," he says.

And he does have hard-won experience. The college dropout has supplemented his music career with manual labor, from building cabinets in Texas to working on a hog farm in Afton. He has no permanent address. Of his transient lifestyle, he says with a laugh, "I wouldn't recommend it." He's content to sit in a friend's backyard and converse about cooking, kids, and neighbors.

"The simplicity of domesticity really appeals to me, mainly because I don't have it," he says. "Everything is so corrupt right now, it seems. You have to go back to nature. You have to go back to the family. That's what I'm trying to do, honestly, because I went out into the world, like everybody else, and thought I could change it. Unless you want to sell your soul or go work for someone who's willing to [sell it] for you, it's very difficult."

Lee's outlook on the future of music is equally bleak—or optimistic, depending on your perspective. He predicts streaming and corporate-run music festivals will be the death of his craft in the next 10 to 15 years, "which I'm grateful for because we'll go back to barn parties and singing around kitchen tables and we'll listen to children and not just give them screens and buy them tickets to Taylor Swift," he says.

For Lee, music was never about making money anyway. Though he's been playing music since he was a teenager, he didn't record anything until age 30. His music-making motivation isn't happiness, either. "I would never pursue something for happiness. Absolutely not. It just doesn't interest me," he says. Instead, it's about connection. "I don't think I'd leave my house or go anywhere if I didn't play music," he says. "Music's just a way for me to connect to more people. If I could knit, I would do that."

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TO

9:00PM

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TO

9:00PM

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FREE WILL ASTROLOGY

>> By Rob Brezsny

♈ ARIES (March 21-April 19): Here are your fortune cookie-style horoscopes for the months ahead. JULY: Discipline your inner flame. Use your radiance constructively. Your theme is controlled fire. AUGUST: Release yourself from dwelling on what's amiss or off-kilter. Find the inspiration to focus on what's right and good. SEPTEMBER: Pay your dues with joy and gratitude. Work hard in service to your beautiful dreams. OCTOBER: You can undo your attractions to "gratifications" that aren't really very gratifying. NOVEMBER: Your allies can become even better allies. Ask them for more. DECEMBER: Be alert for unrecognized value and hidden resources.

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Here are your fortune cookie-style horoscopes for the months ahead. JULY: If you choose to play one of life's trickier games, you must get trickier yourself. AUGUST: Shedding irrelevant theories and unlearning old approaches will pave the way for creative breakthroughs. SEPTEMBER: Begin working on a new product or project that will last a long time. OCTOBER: Maybe you don't need that emotional crutch as much as you thought. NOVEMBER: Explore the intense, perplexing, interesting feelings until you're cleansed and healed. DECEMBER: Join forces with a new ally and/or deepen an existing alliance.

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Here are your fortune cookie-style horoscopes for the months ahead. JULY: It's time to take fuller advantage of a resource you've been neglecting or underestimating. AUGUST: For a limited time only, two plus two equals five. Capitalize on that fact by temporarily becoming a two-plus-two-equals-five type of person. SEPTEMBER: It's time and you're ready to discover new keys to fostering interesting intimacy and robust collaboration. OCTOBER: The boundaries are shifting on the map of the heart. That will ultimately be a good thing. NOVEMBER: If you do what you fear, you'll gain unprecedented power over the fear. DECEMBER: What's the one thing you can't live without? Refine and deepen your relationship to it.

♋ CANCER (June 21-July 22): Here are your fortune cookie-style horoscopes for the months ahead. JULY: Acquire a new personal symbol that thrills your mind and mobilizes your soul. AUGUST: Reconfigure the way you deal with money. Get smarter about your finances. SEPTEMBER: It's time to expedite your learning. But streetwise education is more useful than formal education. Study the Book of Life. OCTOBER: Ask for more help than you normally do. Aggressively build your support. NOVEMBER: Creativity is your superpower. Reinvent any part of your life that needs a bolt of imaginative ingenuity. DECEMBER: Love and care for what you imagine to be your flaws and liabilities.

♌ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Here are your fortune cookie-style horoscopes for the months ahead. JULY: Transform something that's semi-ugly into something that's useful and winsome. AUGUST: Go to the top of the world and seek a big vision of who you must become. SEPTEMBER: Your instinct for worthy and constructive adventures is impeccable. Trust it. OCTOBER: Be alert for a new teacher with a capacity to teach you precisely what you need to learn. NOVEMBER: Your mind might not guide you perfectly, but your body and soul will. DECEMBER: Fresh hungers and budding fascinations should alert you to the fact that deep in the genius part of your soul, your master plan is changing.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Here are your fortune cookie-style horoscopes for the months ahead. JULY: I'd love to see you phase out wishy-washy wishes that keep you distracted from your burning, churning desires. AUGUST: A story that began years ago begins again. Be proactive about changing the themes you'd rather not repeat. SEPTEMBER: Get seriously and daringly creative about living in a more expansive world. OCTOBER: Acquire a new tool or skill that will enable you to carry out your mission more effectively. NOVEMBER: Unanticipated plot twists can help heal old dilemmas about intimacy. DECEMBER: Come up with savvy plans to eliminate bad stress and welcome good stress.

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Here are your fortune cookie-style horoscopes for the months ahead. JULY: Say this every morning: "The less I have to prove and the fewer people I have to impress, the smarter I'll be." AUGUST: Escape an unnecessary limitation. Break an obsolete rule. Override a faded tradition. SEPTEMBER: What kind of "badness" might give your goodness more power? OCTOBER: You're stronger and freer than you thought you were. Call on your untapped power. NOVEMBER: Narrowing your focus and paring down your options will serve you beautifully. DECEMBER: Replace what's fake with the Real Thing.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Here are your fortune cookie-style horoscopes for the months ahead. JULY: Stretch yourself. Freelance, moonlight, diversify, and expand. AUGUST: Having power over other people is less important than having power over yourself. Manage your passions like a wizard! SEPTEMBER: Ask the big question. And be ready to act expeditiously when you get the big answer. OCTOBER: I think you can arrange for the surge to arrive in manageable installments. Seriously. NOVEMBER: Dare to break barren customs and habits that are obstructing small miracles and cathartic breakthroughs. DECEMBER: Don't wait around hoping to be given what you need. Instead, go after it. Create it yourself, if necessary.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Here are your fortune cookie-style horoscopes for the months ahead. JULY: Can you infuse dark places with your intense light without dimming your intense light? Yes! AUGUST: It's time for an archetypal Sagittarian jaunt, quest, or pilgrimage. SEPTEMBER: The world around you needs your practical idealism. Be a role model who catalyzes good changes. OCTOBER: Seek out new allies and connections that can help you with your future goals. NOVEMBER: Be open to new and unexpected ideas so as to get the emotional healing you long for. DECEMBER: Shed old, worn-out self-images. Reinvent yourself. Get to know your depths better.

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Here are your fortune cookie-style horoscopes for the months ahead. JULY: You have an enhanced capacity to feel at peace with your body, not wish it were different from what it naturally is. AUGUST: You can finally solve a riddle you've been trying to solve for a long time. SEPTEMBER: Make your imagination work and play twice as hard. Crack open seemingly closed possibilities. OCTOBER: Move up at least one rung on the ladder of success. NOVEMBER: Make yourself more receptive to blessings and help that you have overlooked or ignored. DECEMBER: You'll learn most from what you leave behind—so leave behind as much as possible.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Here are your fortune cookie-style horoscopes for the months ahead. JULY: I'll cry one tear for you, then I'll cheer. AUGUST: Plant seeds in places that hadn't previously been on your radar. SEPTEMBER: You may seem to take a wrong turn, but it'll take you where you need to go. OCTOBER: Open your mind and heart as wide as you can. Be receptive to the unexpected. NOVEMBER: I bet you'll gain a new power, higher rank, or greater privilege. DECEMBER: Send out feelers to new arrivals who may be potential helpers.

♓ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Here are your fortune cookie-style horoscopes for the months ahead. JULY: Your creative powers are at a peak. Use them with flair. AUGUST: Wean yourself from pretend feelings and artificial motivations and inauthentic communications. SEPTEMBER: If you want to have greater impact and more influence, you can. Make it happen! OCTOBER: Love is weird but good. Trust the odd journey it takes you on. NOVEMBER: If you cultivate an appreciation for paradox, your paradoxical goals will succeed. DECEMBER: Set firm deadlines. Have fun disciplining yourself.

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wed : june 26
7pm : kfai house party presents
luke callen
9:30pm : lenz & frenz
(certain members of
pert near sandstone, farmhouse band,
san souci quartet, row of ducks)

thu : june 27
9:30pm : dan (israel) does dylan

fri : june 28
7pm : laura and sean's
movie and music trivia
10pm : johannes & the secret life,
tortuga!

sat : june 29
7pm : trivia mafia presents
331 drinkin' spelling bee
10pm : dreamboat (cd release),
the twins of franklin

sun : june 30
3-5pm : rezo city
resonator guitar player series
featuring molly maher
8pm : trivia mafia

mon : july 1
8pm : the roe family singers
10pm : doug otto and friends
tue : july 2
7-9pm : t.e.e. tuesday early evening
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july conspiracy series
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SUNDAY JUNE 30

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The Theater of Public Policy

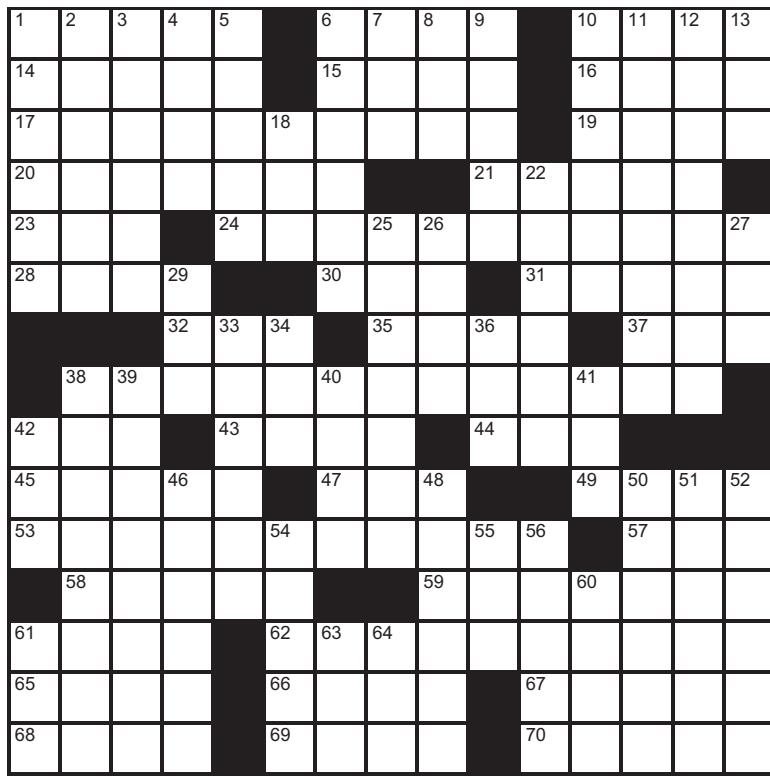
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BOSS WORDS

BY BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY

Across

1 screaming at the top of one's lungs
6 "drop what you're doing" letters
10 recent grads who might be future CEOs
14 Milton who was banned from "SNL"
15 maker of the Z4 and G7 phones
16 "A-Hunting We Will Go" composer Thomas
17 house coverings made of stone
19 skater's jump
20 prods on
21 one likely to have shot down a US drone last week
23 polished off
24 brawny rivals
28 sporty spice
30 pakistani president of the 1980s
31 bibliography information
32 scheduled to arrive
35 gospel singer campbell
37 ten gallon hat wearer
38 does some cardio, say
42 philadelphia union org.
43 envelope for gmail, e.g.
44 the "S" in "DOS": abbr.
45 what a captcha proves you are not
47 with it
49 silicate used in capacitors
53 it's half on staff
57 kip : uk :: ___ : usa

58 cool-headedness
59 delta figure?
61 ice chunk
62 trick or treat container?
65 beginning drawing class
66 grabbed
67 black panther bobby
68 league: abbr.
69 confessional fodder
70 ___ to us

71 fbi operation that inspired "american hustle"
73 pertain (to)
75 big name in cold sore relief
76 counter tenor
77 lively dances
78 israeli author of "elsewhere, perhaps"
79 "... you were saying?"
80 anti-arson org.
81 set forth
82 where to spend kwacha
83 she's just not fair
84 greater or lesser isles
85 speaks, loosely
86 red button on a smartphone camera
87 it'll have you going round in circles
88 hollywood blockbuster that had the working title "planet ice"
89 booty
90 booty

91 cracked copy of photoshop 6.0 holder, maybe qb nicknamed "the golden arm"
92 window-closing key
93 rejections
94 they're played for laughs during credits
95 openings in computers
96 salmon fish
97 belief
98 bride's title
99 (0, 0) on a graph
100 ab strengthening exercises
101 having some drinks, say
102 king of pop
103 tops
104 egg containers
105 one for merkel
106 new and exciting
107 unoccupied
108 bleat it
109 ornamental fish
110 tiny charge carrier

Last Week's Answer

C	O	E	N	S	B	I	O	J	I	M	B	U
A	L	L	O	W	M	I	X	L	A	U	R	A
C	E	L	L	I	W	I	N	E	P	G	N	S
T	I	E	I	N	A	N	A	K	E	Y		
I	N	N	E	E	D	O	F	R	E	P	S	
O	B	I	L	E	I	S	N	O	O	K		
V	A	C	U	M	C	H	A	L	L	E		
U	K	E	S		P	L	I	E	G	O		
M	E	S	A	S	N	I	E	L	S			
S	P	I	A	O	U	I	S	N	O			
K	I	C	K	U	P	S	T	S	P			
E	T	H	I	C	L	A	Y	I	N			
W	Y	E	T	H	A	I	R	N	E			

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Tie Points

Bondage builds connections

I'm a single gay guy in my late 30s. I'm quite introverted and a bit shy, yet I have a rich libido. I've always found the gay scene overwhelming, and my attempts at online dating were not very successful. I feel my quiet ways tend to put people off, and I hardly ever get the chance to show my more playful or crazy sides, as it takes me a bit to feel comfortable. When I was able to, my partners were usually pleasantly surprised and we could enjoy plenty of fun, but I can count these occasions on one hand. I

feel most guys stop at my gentle disposition and assume I must be a bit boring if not a prude altogether. Turns out I actually have quite a few kinks—bondage being one of them—but I have hardly been able to explore them with a partner. Often those drawn to me haven't really been sexually adventurous. By my looks I don't really fit into any of the "tribes" that a lot of gay men identify with. Part of me doesn't care, but I find myself on the outside looking in when searching for a nice guy for a date or more. Would you have any kind of advice to crack this shell of mine open?

ALWAYS LOOKED OVER, NEVER EMBRACED



Dan Savage

in every gay tribe, and bondage guys make up their own tribe.

"ALONE should put any search for a long-term relationship on hold and look for more casual kinky fun," said Boyd. "Recon (recon.com) has always been a good place for me to start conversations. There are others who share his interests, and they are waiting to connect with him."

But you're shy! Connecting is hard! Boyd describes himself the same way, and not only is he married, he doesn't lack for casual play partners.

Tyger Yoshi also describes himself as shy and introverted—and I recently watched him do a bondage demo where he suspended a guy from the ceiling.

"When I first started exploring my interest in bondage, I was lucky enough to be in a city where opportunities were plentiful, even for a shy person," said Yoshi, who's also in his mid-30s. "There were people who wanted to mentor me, but I struggled taking that first step of accepting help."

The kind of help Yoshi eventually accepted can be found at munches, i.e., casual meet-ups where kinky people socialize and connect. And there are educational organizations that offer classes for people who want to hone their bondage skills while learning about best practices. And if you wind up clicking with someone, that person isn't going to assume you're a prude. And unlike at gay bars, skills are just as important as looks at gay bondage events.

"After you start making connections, find local fetish/kink events," said Yoshi. "And as you start exploring more of your kink side, consider the possibility of separating kink and sex at first. Let people know that you are interested in bondage but haven't tried much. An exploratory session is different from a sex session."

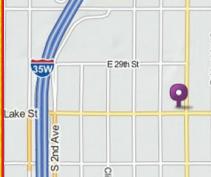
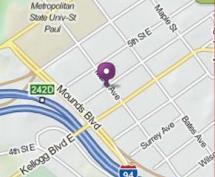
So, ALONE, that thing you've been holding back until you get to know someone? Your interest in bondage? Lead with that. Get involved in the kink scene, work on your skill set, be friendly and open—be the nice guy—and you'll meet lots of men you have something in common with. Trust me, your tribe is out there.

mail@savagelove.net

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A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a black lace lingerie set, poses in front of a large American flag. The background features a red, white, and blue color scheme. Overlaid text includes "Happy Birthday America!", "ACTIVE MILITARY AND VETS ALWAYS GET FREE COVER WITH MILITARY ID", "FREE ADMISSION COUPON THROUGH JULY 20TH, 2019!", and "EXPERIENCE DIAMOND VIP LOUNGE".

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<https://www.northpointhealth.org/>

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